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F.B.I. Is Forecasting New Arrests In Spy Case of Sailor and Father

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 23 — The Federal Bureau of Investigation said today that it expected more arrests in what some officials described as one of gravest security breaches in the history of the Navy.

Spokesmen for the bureau said they expected to arrest additional associates of a retired Navy communications specialist and his son, who have been charged with smuggling secret documents to the Soviet Union.

"I would expect more charges against more people, associates of the father," said Bill Baker, the assistant F.B.I. Director for Congressional and public affairs. "We think this ring is bigger than the two now charged."

The investigation centers on John A. Walker, 47 years old, a former warrant officer who had access to detailed information about the movement of the American and Soviet fleets in his 20 year naval career.

His son, Michael, 22, was arrested Wednesday aboard the aircraft carrier

Nimitz, which is now in Haifa, Israel, after investigators found a box bulging with more than 15 pounds of secret material near his bunk, according to law officials.

"Based on the duration of the espionage and the access of those who have been charged, you have to assume the damage they caused is substantial," Mr. Baker said.

Mr. Walker was arrested Monday after he left more than 120 secret Navy documents at a wooded site in rural Maryland, the F.B.I. said. Some documents, the bureau said, came from the Nimitz, where Seaman Walker is in the brig pending his return to the United States.

Officials and military analysts said that much more valuable information might have been collected by Warrant Officer Walker in his Navy career. In the 1960's he served as a radio officer on two Polaris submarines. In 1967-69,

he was a communications officer in the headquarters of the Atlantic submarine fleet in Norfolk. Then he trained radio officers at the Naval Training Center in San Diego. In 1974, he returned to Norfolk as a communications systems officer, with access to information about the surface fleet. He retired two years later.

In the communications center, analysts said, the warrant officer had knowledge of the whereabouts of individual submarines and their destinations, as well as the methods used to track the Soviet fleet. Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., the former Chief of Naval Operations, said that if the charges against Mr. Walker were true, "this would represent a breach of security as serious as any I can recall."

"Assuming that the charges are true, then it is indeed a grievous loss to the security of our armed forces," said Ray Cline, a former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

The two men were turned in by the older Mr. Walker's former wife and his daughter, officials said.

Agents Still Rummaging

Law-enforcement agents are still rummaging through documents found in searches of Mr. Walker's home in Norfolk, Va., where he had worked as a private detective. He retired from the Navy in 1976.

Mr. Baker said that agents had reviewed materials found in a manila envelope that Mr. Walker was carrying at the time of the arrest.

Inside, Mr. Baker said, was "a wealth of information written in English on Soviet instructions on how to fill and clear a clandestine drop site."

A drop site, in intelligence parlance, describes a place where agents leave information to be picked up by others. Mr. Baker said the envelope had photo-

graphs and maps of what he said were probably Soviet drop sites near Washington.

Former intelligence officers said those were unusual papers for an experienced agent to carry, raising questions about Mr. Walker's methods as an agent. These officers also expressed doubts about reports that he had been an agent for a long time. An experienced agent, they said, would not have incriminating papers on him, and would not have to carry basic instructions.

Bank Accounts Sought

Investigators, he said, were also looking for bank accounts that might have been used by Mr. Walker in the espionage operation.

"We believe the father's reason for doing this was for financial gain," he said. No such accounts have been uncovered, he added.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has said it has information from two sources that Mr. Walker had been spying for the Soviet Union for 15 to 18 years.

Michael Walker joined the Navy in 1982. According to F.B.I. affidavits, he stole secret documents from the Nimitz and passed them on to his father. In letters written earlier this year to his father, Seaman Walker described the documents as "souvenirs," the F.B.I. said. He carried a "secret" clearance, which gave no access to secret documents, or even confidential information unless it related to his clerical job, which was in the ship's operations section.

If convicted on espionage charges, he and his father face a maximum sentence of life in prison. Officials said that the seaman would probably be returned to the United States this week-end.

Mr. Baker said that the people whom the Federal Bureau of Investigation expected to arrest were Americans. The

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bureau declined to say what would happen to a Soviet official who was seen near the Maryland site.

Officials said the documents, many marked "secret" and "confidential," detailed the movements of Soviet military and merchant ships in the Mediterranean. Many were apparently obtained from Seaman Walker on the Nimitz, the bureau said.

Military analysts said information that Mr. Walker might have collected before his retirement from the Navy might have been much more valuable to the Soviet Union. For that reason, he may have been less important to them since he left the service, they said.

Capt. James T. Bush, a retired submarine commander, said that it seemed unlikely that Mr. Walker was "a serious spy" since he chose to retire after only 20 years. If he had been valuable, he said, the Soviet Union would probably have wanted him to remain in the service.

Nevertheless, he said, Mr. Walker had served in some sensitive jobs.

In the 1960's, as a radio officer on Polaris submarines, he probably handled transmission of sensitive intelligence information, officials said.

Eugene J. Carroll, a retired rear admiral, said that radio officers also had knowledge of the codes used to send messages. If information about those codes was given to the Russians, national security might have been jeopardized, he said.

"This man was right in the spot where the information was flowing," said Admiral Carroll, now deputy director of the Center for Defense Information, a policy group that is frequently critical of the military.

"This could certainly advance the Soviet's ability to analyze our traffic and to set up computer programs that would give them an increased possibility of breaking messages," he said. He said codes were changed frequently.

As a communications watch officer in the Norfolk headquarters of the Atlantic submarine fleet in 1967 to 1969, Warrant Officer Walker, officials said, had access to extensive information of value to the Soviet Union.

And because he had security clearance that gave him the ability to see highly secret documents, Mr. Walker was probably aware of most major movements of the submarine fleet, officials said. That could be a threat to national security, they said, since submarines are otherwise difficult for an enemy to track.

"Just from the description of his assignments, it's inconceivable to me that he did not have the opportunity to steal very sensitive data," said Mr. Cline, the former C.I.A. official. "From my reading of what has been said publicly, this is a very serious penetration."

In Norfolk, law-enforcement officials sealed off Mr. Walker's two-story brick home, which is still being searched.

According to the officials, several of Mr. Walker's relatives and friends have been questioned by the F.B.I. Among them was his half-brother, Gary Walker, an electronics technician with the Navy, the officials said.

Mr. Walker is being held without bail in Baltimore, where he and his son were charged.

In Norfolk, neighbors described Mr. Walker, who had been divorced for several years, as reclusive.

"He was a little odd," said Leonard Bruce, a 29-year-old salesman who lives next door. "It's a little odd to live next door to a guy and you never say anything to each other except 'hello.'"

Mr. Walker, he said, carried a gun. "I've never spoken to the man," said Alma Pacini, who said she had been a neighbor for nearly a dozen years. "I would occasionally wave, and he would acknowledge it sometimes. Sometimes he wouldn't. Weird."